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ABSTRACT

A 5-year Title III grant received by Northern Maine Technical College (NMTC) in 1989 provided funding for professional development (PD) activities at the college. To evaluate the impact of the grant and plan for the continuation of the professional development program, a study was conducted in 1994 near the end of the grant period. Following a literature review to identify theoretical bases for staff development, 90 NMTC administrators, staff, and faculty were surveyed regarding their perceptions of 11 types of development activities and of the current program's organizational structure and approval processes. Responses were received from 9 administrators, 10 support staff, and 32 faculty, for an overall response rate of 56%, lower than the 70% response recommended to accurately reflect employee perceptions. With respect to types of development activities, 9 out of the 11 activities received a mean score of 3.5 out of 5, indicating approval, with university courses and seminars or workshops receiving the highest ratings. In addition, respondents generally favored continuation of the current process and structure. Other conclusions included the following: (1) employees were not certain of the adequacy and appropriateness of communications from the college's PD committee; (2) there was a strong perception of the positive impact of PD funding; and (3) performance evaluation and PD funding priority should have a closer connection. Contains 18 references, the survey instrument, and responses to open-ended questions. (KP)

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ASSESSMENT OF EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS OF PRESENT AND FUTURE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES AT NORTHERN MAINE TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Trends and Issues in Vocational, Technical, and Occupational Education

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A Practicum Report presented to Nova Southeastern University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

Nova Southeastern University

August, 1994

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by

Terrence H. Overlock, Sr.

August, 1994

Nearing the completion of a five year Title III Strengthening Institutions grant that had provided over $150,000 annually for the funding of professional development activities of NMTC employees, it was important to assess the impact of the program and plan for its continuation. The research questions for this project were (a) What are the staff's priorities for future activities after Title III funding expires? and, (b) What are the staff's perceptions of the current professional development (PD) program?

Ninety NMTC employees were surveyed via the campus mail system resulting in a 56% response rate. Even with the low response rate, the results were generally

positive. In general, those responding favored the continuation of the current process and structure. The strongest and most uniform perception was that funding availability had a positive impact on the personal, professional, and learning environments at NMTC.

It was concluded that (a) the results may not be representative of employee opinions, (b) employees favored continued funding of listed activities, (c) the current program process and structure is supported by exemplary practice and generally favored by all employees, (d) employees were not sure of the adequacy and appropriateness of communications from the PDC, (e) there was a strong perception of the positive impact of PD funding availability on working/learning environment at NMTC, and (e) performance evaluation and PD funding priority should have a closer connection.

Recommendations included (a) readminister the questionnaire during the fall 1994 employee workshop, (b) continue funding current activities, (c) continue the current program process and structure, (d) the PDC should review and/or revise its communications procedures, and (e) continue adequate funding support of PD activities for all employees.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Background and Significance

Northern Maine Technical College (NMTC) is a small, two year institution located in rural northern Aroostook County, Maine. One of six colleges within the Maine Technical College System (MTCS), NMTC offered 19 different occupational training programs to approximately 650 full-time students and 2000-plus part-time students. Continuing education and short-term training for business and industry were also on the increase. As NMTC leadership strived to move the campus from the technical institute paradigm to the technical college paradigm, the importance of a professional development program to the change process became evident. Two major barriers to professional development identified by campus leadership were (a) geographical isolation, and (b) inadequate funding. As a result of an intensive strategic planning and grant writing process, NMTC received a five year 2.5 million dollar Title III Strengthening Institutions grant in 1989. Of that amount, nearly $160,000 was annually available to fund professional development activities of faculty and staff. Funding priority was given to

the following professional development activities: (a) course work toward the Baccalaureate credential, (b) course work toward graduate credentials, (c) specialty certification and recertification, (d) national and regional conference and workshop attendance, and (e) industry exchange and internships.

During the course of the five year grant, much positive professional development activity took place. Development Office records for the grant period show one person received the baccalaureate credential and eight others completed over 50% of their respective programs. Eighteen people received the masters credential. One person received, and three nearly completed, the doctoral credential. Twenty to thirty faculty and staff traveled to national and regional conferences and workshops annually, and others took part in internships with business and industry. All of this combined to create an air of growth and change within the institution. Maintaining this professional development momentum was important to continued high morale of faculty and staff and the continued climate of growth and change in the learning environment of NMTC.

With the Title III grant project due for completion in September of 1994, the professional development committee felt it was important to evaluate what had been done and make plans for the continuation of a comprehensive professional development program at NMTC. At its February 14,1994 meeting, the NMTC professional development committee instructed the professional development director to prepare a survey that would evaluate faculty and staff perceptions of the current program and attempt to identify priorities for continued professional development activities. This action was supported by comments from a project review conducted by an outside consultant (Kern, 1992) who stressed the importance of developing a plan for the continuation of the program after the expiration of Title III funds. Therefore, the purpose for this study was to assess faculty and staff perceptions of the existing professional development program and identify priorities for continued activity after the conclusion of the Title III project.

The current climate of many community and technical colleges is one of ever increasing complexity. Changing demographics, rapidly changing occupational requirements, advanced technology, new

teaching techniques, issues of accountability, challenges of diversity, financial pressures, aging faculty and other factors all illustrate the fact that change is and will continue to be a constant factor that must be dealt with if colleges are to effectively meet the educational needs of their communities.

> Because the fact of change is so much a part of our lives today, and because it is a central part of the community college role in our society, the concept of lifelong learning becomes a critical part of the community. Change means that continuous learning is a fact of life for adults. The community college is uniquely designed to meet the need for continuous, or lifelong learning. It is simply an extension of this reality, that the staff who work in community colleges must themselves be lifelong learners. Staff development is a life long process. (Stern, 1989, p. 3)

Linkages between organizational effectiveness and mission fulfillment are noted by Bland and Schmitz (1988) and the Commission on the Future of Community Colleges (1988). The commission (1988, p.12) states,

> The staff of a college is its single greatest resource. In economic terms the staff is the college's most significant and largest capital investment. We affirm that it is only good sense that the investment should be helped to appreciate in value and not be allowed to wear itself out or slide into obsolescence by inattention or neglect.

Research Question

The research questions for this study were as follows: (a) What are the staff's priorities for future

activities after Title III funding expires? and; (b) What are the staff's perceptions of the current professional development program?

This study was related to the Trends and Issues in Vocational, Technical, and Occupational Education seminar. In this seminar, the concept of lifelong learning was a major point of discussion not only as it pertains to students, but to faculty as well. The "half-life of new knowledge is now estimated to be a little as five to ten years (Parnell, 1990). The need for continued professional development activity is further stressed by the National Council for Staff, Program, and Organizational Development (NCSPOD).

> The present shelf-life of any educational experience is drastically less than what it was a decade ago. A professional at any level of college employment who has not had additional education/training within the last five years either through inhouse staff development, external courses or industrial involvement is flirting with stagnation. Such individuals are in danger of "rusting out". (NCSPOD, 1988, p. 11)

Ongoing professional development has become a major trend in VTOE as pressures from the education reform movement and technological change combine to heighten the need for ongoing development or "lifelong learning"

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Findlen (1994) points out that complex social organizations that don't evolve and adapt to changing societal expectations will not survive. Technical colleges are no exception. The rapid changes occurring within our society make it more necessary than ever that technical colleges foster a philosophy that values lifelong learning and embraces change as an ongoing aspect of institutional operations. Stern (1989, p. 1) links staff development and lifelong learning to this change process with the following:

> Because the fact of change is so much a part of our lives today, and because it is a central part of the community college role in our society, the concept of lifelong learning becomes a critical part of the community college. Change means that continuous learning is a fact of life for adults. The community college is uniquely designed to meet the need for continuous, or lifelong learning. It is simply an extension of this reality, that the staff who work in community colleges must themselves be lifelong learners. Staff development is lifelong learning.

"When the climate of learning for staff is open, flexible, affirming, challenging, the climate of learning for students is likely to be similar" (O'banion, in Stern, 1989, p. 1). The Commission of the Future of Community Colleges (1988) further

affirmed the necessity of staff development by identifying the primary mission of the community college as teaching and learning. The core of the teaching and learning process is an energized and involved faculty.

The National Council for Staff, Program, and Organizational Development (NCSPOD, 1992, p. 2) further illustrates the necessity of a strong staff development effort with the following:

> Staff development is central and highly contributory to the educative process. Teaching in today's society demands that instructors be conversant in the latest developments in their disciplines and experts in developing and providing instruction through a variety of instructional methodologies. Knowledge is an ever-changing and expanding commodity. Whether interpreting the humanities or exploring the evolution of technology associated with vocational education, instructors require cutting edge knowledge and dynamic delivery methodologies to successfully transmit discipline specific information.

A good staff development process will include theory, research, and exemplary practices. Piecemeal, fragmented methods and structures cannot begin to cope with the realities of the 1990's (Miller and Holzpfel, 1989). However, meaningful change will not be accomplished unless individuals in the organization are convinced of the need to do so. The primary focus of

any staff development program must therefore be the individual and how she/he reacts to, or accepts change. This reaction is deeply imbedded in his/her stage of development and its associated thinking/learning style. The program must be based on adult learning theory and focus on meeting the needs of the individual if organizational needs are to be met.

Sinclair and Skerman (in Ovando, 1990, p. 4) list the following andragogical based program goals:

> 1. To provide an environment where participants take control of their learning process.
> 2. To provide a wide range of resources to facilitate the individual learning process.
> 3. To encourage the development of initiative, autonomy, and risk taking in seeking out learning opportunities.
> 4. To allow maximum opportunity for participants to achieve individually set goals, relevant to their own learning needs or the needs perceived as important in the system or institution.
> 5. To maximize the use of participant's own internal motivation and felt need.
> 6. To provide a design where participants adopt a learning pace and style appropriate to their own background.
> 7. To provide an environment in which individuals are stimulated to explore new possibilities.

"A college is three things: people, programs and places - and in that order of importance" (Miller and Holzpfel, 1988, p. 97). Managing the human component in two year colleges is the central and most important task because everything else in the college depends on

how well this is achieved (Miller and Holzpfel, 1988). Ownership is an essential part of any successful staff development program. Feelings of ownership are enhanced if: (a) staff members feel the program is designed to meet their needs; (b) it is supported by frequent assessment of needs; (c) feedback is carefully considered when planning; (d) a representative group is charged with planning, implementation, presentation, and (e) regular evaluation of the program is done (NCSPOD, 1991).

Variations of three basic models are commonly found in today's community colleges. They are the comprehensive model, the faculty/classified model and the faculty model. NCSPOD recommends the comprehensive model because it "fosters professional and skill development as an essential and regular part of the institutional operations for all personnel within an institution, including the governing board" (NCSPOD, 1991, p. 6). Selman and Shum (1990) describe a similar model for professional development used at J.F. Ingram State Technical College, Deatsville, Alabama. The faculty/classified model differs from the comprehensive model "in that it provides in-service and professional improvement for the faculty and the classified staff

only" (NCSPOD, 1991, p. 6) and one would assume from the name the faculty model would concentrate on providing assistance to faculty only. NCSPOD (1991) has found that as programs mature they tend to move from the narrow faculty focus to the comprehensive program focus that serves all employees.

> The determination of which model is appropriate will usually depend upon (1) the mission and strategic plan of the college, (2) the leadership provided by the president and the board of the local college and (3) the financial resources made available to staff development activities. (NCSPOD, 1991, p. 5)

Linking the value of staff development to the reform movement being experienced by technical colleges Selman and Shum (1990, p. 1) say:

> Educational reform is taking place and will continue to occur within technical colleges. The availability of effective administrative leadership, classroom/laboratory teachers and support staffs will be the key to any meaningful and lasting reform. . . . The majority of today's technical college administrative staffs were recruited from the ranks of yesterdays successful teachers. Most technical teachers were (and will continue to be) recruited into teaching from the ranks of practicing technicians. . . . Although occupational work experience is vital to technical education, it does not by itself assure success in providing effective educational programs or qualified personnel (Rockmaker and Modlin in Selman & Shum 1990).

Stern (1989, p. 8) points out that "staff development and performance appraisal both have a

common goal: improved organizational performance. Both are essential". Hammons (in Stern, 1989) feels that having one without the other may be worse than having neither and Stern (1989, p.8) states:

> A performance appraisal which points out a deficiency without an accompanying means of correcting the deficiency will lead to frustration, and not necessarily to improved performance. Performance improvement and growth may be short lived without a means to recognize and reward such effort and growth. Thus both staff development and evaluation need to be alive and well within the institution.

Staff development should be part of a multifaceted performance appraisal system (Stern, 1989) that allows for recognition of improvement efforts and leads to reflection about self improvement. Licata (1988, p. 55) states: "Institutions must . . . be committed to provide the necessary resources to synchronize the evaluation system with appropriate faculty development efforts." It is important, even though evaluation and development activities are linked, that the evaluation and development activities be separate activities and not be administered from the same office.

NCSPOD (1991) suggests that leadership for these programs be supplied with a fulltime professional human resource development person, but realizes that most institutions can not fund additional positions

initially. Should this be the case, it is suggested that a faculty person be given at least 50% release time to act as the staff development coordinator and be directly supported by an administrator at the dean level or above. Adequate release time is as critical to the success of the program as assessing needs, organizing programs and evaluating their success. Also, "in most situations, colleges with successful programs have formed 'Staff Development Committees' containing at least one member from each employee group" (NCSPOD, 1991, p. 6).

Stern (1989) lists the following principles which provide a foundation for a successful staff development program: (a) lifelong learning is a goal for both students and staff; (b) all members of the community college staff are adult learners; (c) the principles of andragogy are the basis for the program; (d) the emphasis will be on growth to achieve desired profeciencies (not fixing deficiencies); (e) whenever skills are being taught, learners will have an opportunity for practice with feedback so that their confidence is enhanced, and (f) people want to be successful and generally want to do the best job possible.

Elements often found in successful programs are listed by Stern (1989) include the following: (a) mechanisms for mutual planning, (b) institutional and professional needs assessments, (c) self-assessment (d) cooperation with other community colleges in the region, (e) a variety of activities and opportunities, (f) appropriate incentives, (g) evaluation of individual offerings and the total program, (h) staff development opportunities will be widely publicized and promoted through a variety of media, (i) a statement of goals (j) widespread use of professional and personal development plans (k) demonstrated support of staff development by the administration and the board of trustees, (l) clearly stated goals and objectives for the program which support the mission and goals of the college, and (m) the program is a year-round activity in which participation is primarily voluntary. Eble and McKeachie in (in Gratton and Walleri, 1989) feel successful staff development programs are those characterized by high faculty involvement, feelings of ownership, increased colleague support, shared goals, and renewed commitment to teaching and learning. Successful programs stretch faculty to see beyond their own individual growth and to understand their impact on

students and the institution. The professional development model utilized at J.F. Ingram State Technical College (Selman & Shum, 1990, p. 9) utilized a "planning procedure and implementation process, encompassing professional development activities that assist college staff by increasing knowledge and skills to levels commensurate with present related job positions and future aspirations.

Groff (1992), discussing the human resources development philosophy that forms the basis for a staff development program, lists the following as important elements of a human resources development philosophy:

> (1) Humans are the most important resource of the institution.
> (2) Competence is an additive process; talents and skills of individuals within the institution must be cultivated systematically.
> (3) Persons to be affected by plans and decisions should have a role in making them.
> (4) Involvement in planning leads to a purposeful commitment and investment of time on the part of the participant.
> (5) Collaborative goal setting represents a way of creating mutually beneficial futures and working toward building solutions rather than trying to escape from irreconcilable problems. (p.25)

"Human resource development begins with socialization of the individual into the institution and continues with a nurturing process that will provide ongoing staff development" (Groff, 1992, p. 26). Staff

development must be imbedded in the philosophy and culture of a college for continuous growth to thrive. Roland Barth (Miller lecture, August 1989) sums up the importance of staff development as follows:

> Probably nothing within [an institution] has more impact upon students in terms of skill development, self confidence, or classroom behavior than the professional growth of their [instructors] . . . when [faculty] stop growing, so do their students.

As previously mentioned, Stern (1989) and NCSPOD (1988) identify evaluation of individual and program offerings as an important element to be found in successful development programs. Varcoe (1993) also identifies evaluation and feedback as important aspects of any change effort. Since successful programs are ongoing and strongly linked to organizational effectiveness, it is imperative that the evaluation professional development programs be ongoing and provide the necessary feedback to program managers.

Two surveys of professional development programs were found that assessed faculty development needs. None were found that assessed total staff needs or assessed perceptions of the process and structure of the program in question as this project was designed to do.

Gratton and Walleri (1989) assessed faculty perceived needs for professional development at Mt. Hood Community College. Based on a 78% response rate, it was found that 93% of the faculty used inservice sessions, but found them to be the least beneficial of all activities listed. All other activities were found to be beneficial, but their usage varied widely. Faculty indicated that professional development activities had enhanced their teaching effectiveness and contributed to their personal growth. While faculty were nearly neutral on the issue of resource support, they did indicate satisfaction with support received from colleagues and recognition given for development activities. Faculty also indicated concern about adequate funding, release time, and administrative support.

Seppanen (1990) reported the results of a survey that assessed the professional development needs of the 2,684 fulltime faculty of the 27 Washington community colleges. The findings are based on a 70% response rate. The highest interest was expressed in activities that enhanced the ability to work with students. Six other high interest areas included the following: (a) instructional methods, (b) use of computers, (c) use of

technology, (d) articulation with universities, (e) critical thinking, and (f) added expertise in a specific field.

Release time activities were highly favored, but local workshops and individual development activities yielded the greatest interest. Similar to the Gratton and Walleri study, the respondents identified limited time and funding as major barriers to participation. They also indicated that undesirable location was also a barrier to participation.

It seems quite clear from the literature that there is a strong link between organizational effectiveness and ongoing professional development activities. Successful professional development programs are goal directed, highly participatory, andragogical based, linked to an ongoing strategic planning process and require constant evaluation and feedback to assess the impact of the program on the institution's effectiveness. The importance of a well organized professional development program to overall institutional effectiveness will greatly increase in the future as technical colleges strive to keep pace with rapid societal and global change.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

The evaluation problem-solving methodology was used in this project because the data gathered was used to evaluate the current professional development program and make judgements about future professional development activities at NMTC. Three steps were used in this project. First, a review of the literature was conducted to identify a theoretical basis for implementing staff development programs at two year institutions and to identify foundation practices and elements of successful programs.

Second, 90 questionnaires were distributed to employees through the campus mail system. A cover letter explaining the survey purpose and the response process to be followed was attached to each. A follow-up memo was sent at the end of two weeks thanking those who had responded and reminding those who had not to return the completed questionnaire as soon as possible.

The questionnaire used in this project was previously developed by the professional development activity director using guidelines developed by Cristiano (1990) and Gibney (1993). Part one focused on staff perceptions of the value of 11 typical

professional development activities found in the literature, most of which had been included during the five year project. Part two attempted to identify faculty perceptions of the program organizational structure, and approval processes. A five point Likert rating scale was used to quantify faculty perceptions on each survey item. The scale range from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree with 3 indicating a neutral response. A copy of the questionnaire with cover letter is included in Appendix A.

Third, the responses for each employee group surveyed were tabulated by computer spreadsheet and the mean response and standard deviation on each item was calculated. A mean score of 3.5 or greater was considered an indication of agreement with the statement and a mean score of 2.5 or less was considered to indicate a lack of agreement. A list of responses to the open ended questions was also compiled and is included in Appendix B. Conclusions were drawn and recommendations were made. The results were presented PDC and the NMTC management team for use in planning future professional development efforts and in preparing the final Title III grant project report.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study professional development and staff development were used interchangeably. Staff development was the preferred term, and was defined as professional growth activities that were available to all college employees and approved for funding through the PDC.

For the purposes of this project the administrator group included the members of the management team and members of the administrative bargaining group; support staff included all office and maintenance support staff and; total staff included all employees surveyed. Questionnaire was defined as "a written or printed form comprising a series of questions submitted to a number of persons in order to obtain data for a survey or report" (Funk & Wagnalls, 1964, p. 1034).

Limitations

Limitations of this study included: (a) the results could only be generalized to the NMTC campus; and (b) a less than 70% response rate limited the interpretation of the results as a true reflection of faculty perceptions (Borg, 1987).

Assumptions

Assumptions applied to this study included: (a) employee responses would truly represent their perceptions of the current professional development program, and (b) the questionnaire used in this project was valid and reliable.

Chapter Four

RESULTS

Following the initial response period, 7 administrators, 6 support staff, and 28 faculty had returned completed questionnaires. At the end of the additional two week follow-up response period and additional 2 administrators, 4 support staff and 4 faculty had returned completed questionnaires. This resulted in a 56% response rate; much less than the minimum 70% usually expected in surveys of this sort (Borg, 1987). The results were reported as they pertained to the two research questions.

Research Question One

What are staff funding priorities for future professional development activities after Title III funds expire? Items 1 - 11 of the questionnaire addressed this question. The total staff mean score for these items were calculated and are listed in Table 1. Items receiving a mean score of 3.5 or higher included the following: (a) group workshops, (b) university courses, (c) training with follow-up, (d) seminars/workshops, (e) professional meetings, (f) on-the-job work experience, (g) national conferences, (h) regional conferences, (i) and staff/industry exchanges.

Subscriptions to journals and professional memberships received a no opinion score.

Table 1

Total Staff Funding Priorities for Professional Development

Questionnaire Item	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
1. Group Workshops	3.9	0.98
2. University Courses	4.2	0.94
3. Training with follow-up	3.9	0.84
4. Seminars/workshops	4.2	0.65
5. Professional meetings	3.5	1.00
6. On-the-job training	3.5	1.00
7. National conferences	3.9	1.00
8. Regional conferences	3.9	0.99
9. Professional memberships	3.2	1.10
10. Prof. journal subscriptions	3.2	1.20
11. Staff/industry exchange	3.6	0.99

Research Question Two

What are the staff's perceptions of the current professional development program? Part two of the

questionnaire assessed employee responses to this question through questionnaire items 12 through 26e.

Items 12 - 25 assessed staff perceptions of the process and structure of the current program. The results are shown in table 2 below.

Table 2

Total Staff Perceptions of Process and Structure of The NMTC Professional Development Program Items 12 - 25

Questionnaire Item	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
12. Continue approval process	3.7	0.88
13. Continue Individual Development plan process	3.7	0.88
14. Review of individual plans by immediate supervisor	4.0	0.72
15. Review of individual plans by area supervisor	3.6	0.92
16. Continue reporting process	3.8	0.75
17. Maintain PDC structure	3.5	0.98
18. Communications adequate and appropriate	3.0	1.00
19. Primary funding approval remain with the PDC	3.4	1.20
20. All employee groups should have representation on PDC	4.1	0.99

21. Representation determined by each group	4.1	0.93
22. Maintain Prof. Development coordinator position	3.4	1.20
23. Equal funding eligibility for all NMTC employees	4.6	0.60
24. Funding priority based on:		
a. Individual performance eval.	3.3	1.00
b. Program evaluation	3.3	1.00
c. Indiv. Devel. Plans	3.9	0.87
d. Department goals	4.3	0.77
e. Institutional goals	4.2	0.73
f. Institutional mission	4.1	0.67
25. Annual PD goals set by PDC in support of campus strategic plan	3.8	0.78

All items 12 through 25 received a mean score of 3.5 or greater except the following: (a) the current approval process should be continued; (b) the communications from the committee has been adequate and appropriate; (c) the professional development coordinator position should be continued with appropriate release time to fulfill duties; (d) funding requests should receive priority based on individual performance evaluation; and (e) funding requests should receive priority based on program evaluation. All of

these items garnered a no opinion response. Items receiving general agreement included the following: (a) the current individual development plan process should be continued; (b) individual development plans should be reviewed by one's immediate supervisor; (c) individual development plans should be reviewed by one's area supervisor; (d) the current end-of-activity reporting requirements should be continued; (e) primary approval of funding requests should rest with the professional development committee; (f) all employee groups, including management, should be represented on the committee; (g) representation on the committee should be determined by each employee group; (h) all NMTC employees should be eligible for funding support for professional development activities; and (i) prioritizing of funding requests should be based on individual development plans, department goals, institutional goals, and the institutional mission.

Items 26a through 26e assessed employee feelings of the "value added" resulting from the availability of funding through the Title III project. All items received a mean score of 4 with no one group giving a mean score less than 3.5 indicating a solid perception of value added resulting from the funding availability.

Table 3

Total Staff Perceptions of "Value Added" Resulting from Availability of Funding For Professional Development

Questionnaire Item	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
26. Availability of funding support has:		
a. made a difference personally	4.1	0.95
b. made a difference professionally	4.2	0.94
c. prompted positive changes in the NMTC work environment	4.0	1.00
d. had a positive influence on the professional environment at NMTC	4.2	0.84
e. had a positive influence on the student experience at NMTC	4.0	0.86

A comparison of individual group scores to total staff scores on items 1 - 11 is shown in Figure 1. This revealed that some differences on opinion between groups not shown in the by the overall total staff means previously discussed. Items receiving solid agreement for continued funding (4 or more) varied by group. The administrators indicated agreement for continued funding of group workshops, university courses, training with follow-up, seminars/workshops,

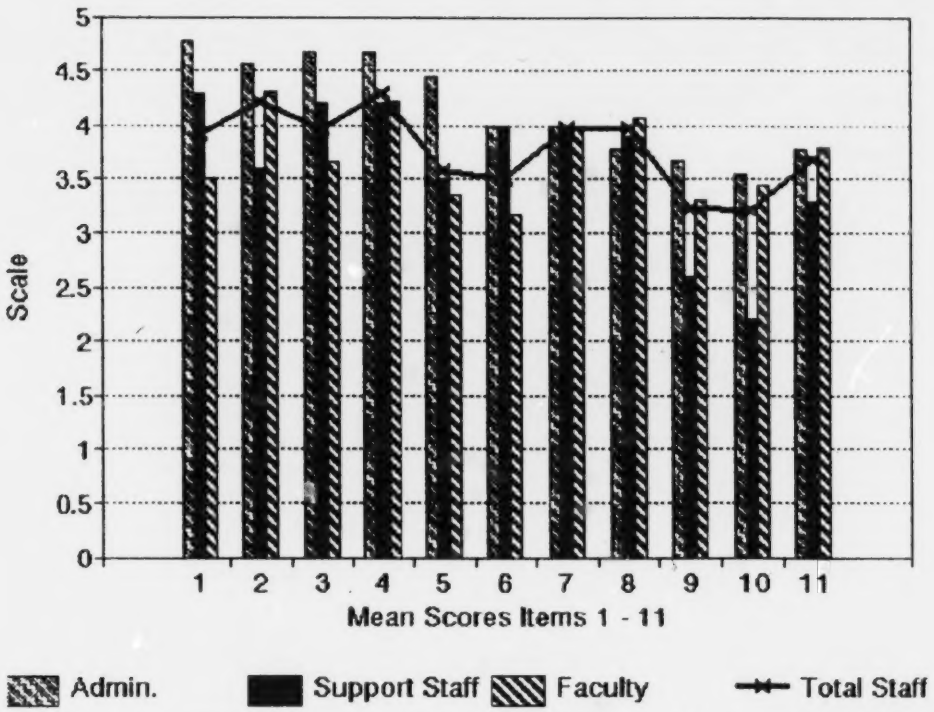

Figure 1. Professional Development Funding Priorities of NMTC Employees

on-the-job training, work experience and national conferences. Support staff indicated that group workshops, training with follow-up, seminars/workshops, on-the-job training, work experience and national conferences were their main interests. Faculty indicated solid agreement for the continued funding of university courses, seminars/workshops, and regional conferences. The administrators showed a wider range of opinion on national conferences and regional conferences than the other groups as indicated by

standard deviations of 1.41 and 1.3 respectively on these items. All others yielded a standard deviation of less than one indicating a narrower range of opinion.

Figure 2 compared groups scores on items 12 - 23 with the total staff mean scores on these items. These items assessed employee perceptions of the process and structure used in the professional development program at NMTC.

The administrators indicated strong support (4 or more) for continued review of individual development plans by an employee's immediate and area supervisors and for equal funding eligibility for all NMTC employees. Support staff indicated strong support for equal representation for all employee groups on the PDC and equal eligibility for funding support for all NMTC employees. Faculty showed strong support for continued review of individual development plans by the immediate supervisor, equal representation for all employees on the PDC, committee representation to be elected by each group and, equal funding eligibility for all employees. With a mean score of 2.1, the administrators indicated disagreement with leaving primary approval for funding requests with the PDC.

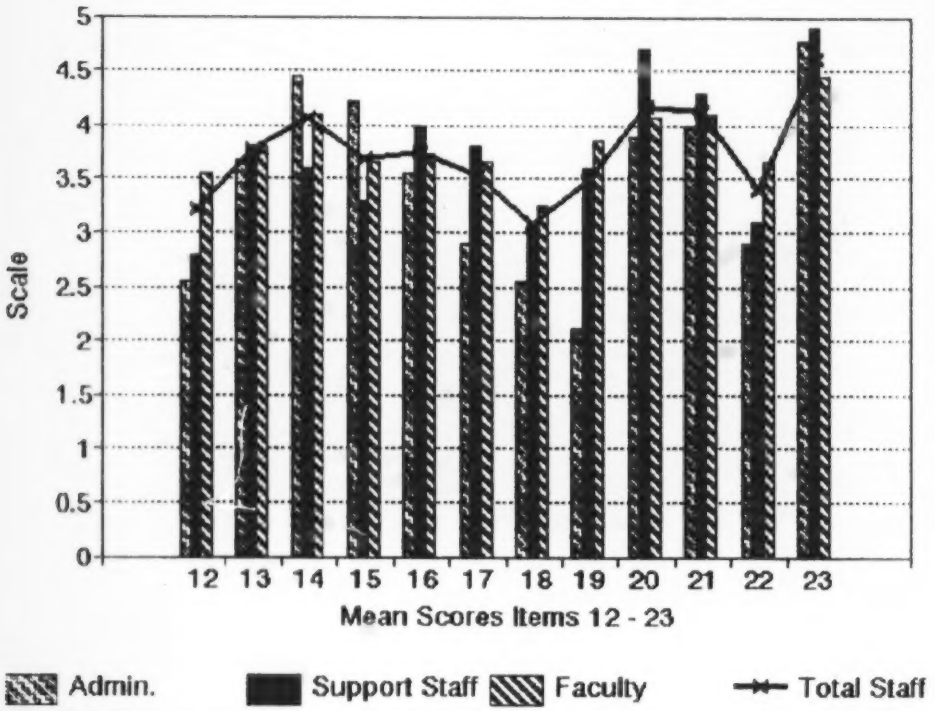

Figure 2. Employee Perceptions of NMTC Professional Development Program (Items 12 - 23)

Group means scores on items 24a - 24f dealing with priorities for funding requests, 25 dealing with connecting the planning process to the campus strategic plan and items 26a - 26e were shown in comparison to the total staff mean scores in Figure 3.

Concerning items 24a - 24f, the administrators indicated strong agreement with basing funding requests on program evaluations, department and institutional goals and institutional mission. Support staff did not indicate strong agreement or disagreement with these

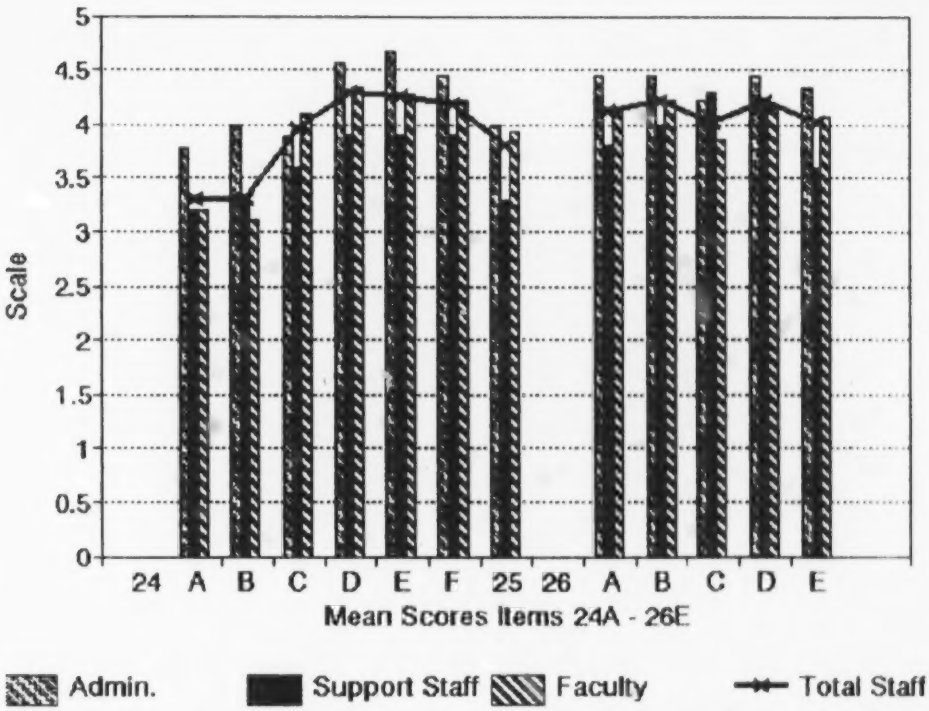

Figure 3. Employee Perceptions of The NMTC Professional Development Program (Items 24a - 26e)

items. Faculty showed strong agreement with prioritizing funding requests based on individual development plans, department goals, institutional goals and institutional mission. Prioritizing funding requests based on individual performance evaluation was generally supported by the administrators (3.7), but received no opinion from support staff and faculty. Faculty and staff indicated no opinion on utilizing program evaluations to prioritize funding requests. The administrators were the only group to show strong

agreement with having the PDC develop annual development plans in support of the campus strategic plan. Faculty indicated agreement with a 3.9, but support staff indicated no opinion.

The assessment of "value added" (items 26a - 26e, Figure 3) resulting from the availability of funding received the strongest and most uniform response from all groups. The administrators solidly agreed that funding availability had made a difference personally and professionally, that it had prompted many positive changes in the work environment and had been a positive influence on the professional environment and the student learning experience at NMTC. Support staff indicated that funding availability had prompted positive changes in the work environment and the professional environment. Faculty strongly agreed that funding availability had made a difference personally and professionally and that it had a positive influence on the professional environment and the student experience at NMTC.

Eleven people chose to respond to the open ended questions. Eight of them provided constructive criticism and/or suggested changes to be made. Three indicated positive feelings about the program.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion

All of the professional development activities listed in the questionnaire received general support from one or more of the employee groups surveyed, but their importance varied among groups. While all groups favored continued funding of group workshops, faculty favored them the least. The respondents to the Gratton and Walleri (1989) faculty survey, found them to be the most utilized, but least beneficial. They also indicated a wide variance in the use of other professional development activities available. Successful andragogical based development programs allow for individual goal setting relevant to individual and institutional needs and participants adopt a learning pace and style appropriate to their own background. While the activities listed were the primary ones funded by Title III funds Stern (1989) listed a variety of others that may meet the development needs of the individual or institution.

When compared to human resource development theory, adult learning theory, and exemplary programs

found in the literature, NMTC employee opinions of the current program process and governance structure are generally supported. The current approval process satisfies the need for ownership in the planning and approval process identified by NCSPOD (1988), Eble and McKeachie (in Gratton & Walleri, 1989), and Groff (1992). Ownership is also an important part of any andragogical based program discussed by Sinclair & Skerman (in Ovando, 1990).

All groups indicated that the current individual development plan process should be continued. This agrees with Stern (1989) who lists widespread use of personal and professional development plans as one of the elements found in successful professional development programs. Groff (1992) feels that involvement in planning leads to purposeful commitment and investment of time.

All groups felt that immediate supervisors should review individual development plans. Faculty and administrators felt that review by area supervisors was also important. Stern (1989) supported this by listing mutual planning efforts as an element of successful programs and emphasized the importance of clearly stated goals and objectives which supported the mission

and goals of the college. Eble and McKeachie (in Gratton & Walleri, 1989) also emphasized the importance of shared goals.

Continuation of the current end-of-activity reporting requirement was also supported by all groups. This agreed with the continual assessment and feed back process identified by NCSPOD (19880) and Stern (1989) as an important part of successful programs. Varcoe (1993) indicates that continual assessment and feedback is essential to any successful change effort.

Faculty and support staff indicated a preference for continuation of the professional development committee structure while the administrators indicated no opinion. This is a main mechanism for employee ownership in the process. Ownership in the process is an important element of any andragogical based program identified by Sinclair and Skerman (in Ovando, 1990). NCSPOD (1988) feels ownership is assured by charging a representative group to lead, plan and evaluate the program. Eble and McKeachie (in Gratton & Walleri, (1989) and Groff (1992) also identify ownership in the process as a main element for success.

The importance of ongoing communications in successful development programs is listed by Stern

(1989) and NCSPOD (1988). Administrators did not feel that communications from the committee had been adequate; faculty and support staff offered no opinion.

While faculty and support staff felt that primary approval for funding should remain with the PDC, the administrators felt it should not. This was the only survey item that received a definite perception of disagreement. Sinclair and Skerman (in Ovando, 1990) felt that successful andragogical based programs would ensure that participants control the process, and NCSPOD (1988) emphasized the importance of having a representative group that was charged with planning, implementation, and presentation of the program.

All groups agreed fairly uniformly with representation of all employee groups on the committee. There was also agreement that representation on the PDC should be determined by each employee group. This agreed with the ownership aspect of andragogical based programs identified by Sinclair and Skerman (in Ovando, 1990) and the mutual planning aspects of successful programs identified by Stern (1989).

Continuation of the professional development coordinators position with appropriate release time elicited a wider range of response. Faculty indicated

that it should; support staff and administrators had no opinion. However, a standard deviation of 1.1 or greater indicated a wider variance in opinion on this item. NCSPOD (1988) felt that this leadership position was important and should have at least 50% release time to fulfill the duties of the position and at least two years in the assignment.

All three employee groups indicated a strong perception that all employee groups should be eligible for funding support of professional development activities. This would enhance employee ownership (NCSPSOD,1988). Respondents to the Gratton and Walleri study (1989) indicated that limited funding support for professional development activities was a major barrier to their participation.

There was disagreement on the use of individual performance and program evaluation. However, Hammons (in Stern, 1989), Licata (1988), and Stern (1989) all emphasized the importance of linking performance appraisal to the development process. Stern (1989, p. 8) pointed out that "staff development and performance appraisal both have a common goal: improved organizational performance. Both are essential". NCSPOD (1988) also emphasized the importance of regular

evaluation. All groups indicated strong support for basing funding priorities on individual development plans, department and institutional goals, and the institutional mission. Stern (1989) indicated the importance of clearly stated goals and objectives which supported the mission and goals of the college.

There was also general support for annual professional development goals to be developed by the PDC in support of the institutional strategic plan. NCSPOD (1988) felt ownership in the process was enhanced if a representative group is charged with planning, implementation, and presentation. Stern (1989) emphasized that clear goals in support of the institutional mission were an important element found in successful programs.

Item 26 provided that the availability of funding support for professional development had done much to promote improved employee morale and spirit. Rice (in Gratten & Walleri, 1989) described dispirited faculty as an institutional problem of major proportions because academic institutions depend on a vital dynamic staff to accomplish their mission.

Conclusions

Several conclusions were reached based on a combination of the results of the literature review and the survey. First, due to the low response rate, the survey results may not be representative of employee opinions of the professional development program at NMTC. Second, employees favored continued funding support for activities currently funded by Title III. Third, all aspects of the current program's process and structure have solid foundation in theory and exemplary practice and were generally favored by NMTC employees. Fourth, not all employees were sure that the communications from the PDC had been adequate and appropriate. Fifth, employees strongly perceived that the availability of Title III funds for professional development activities had a positive impact on the personal and professional experiences of NMTC employees, and had positively affected the student experience at NMTC. Sixth, even though employee opinion on tying funding priority to personal performance and program evaluation is not strong, there is strong support in theory and exemplary practice to tie them closely to funding for professional development.

Implications

The low response rate may have indicated an employee perception that responding to the survey might be a waste of time because of lack of future funding or the result of poor timing of the administering of the questionnaire. Therefore, the results may have been a true representation of employee perceptions.

Varied support for (a) continuation of the current approval process, (b) retention of the current PDC structure, (c) maintaining the primary funding approval with the PDC, and (d) continuation of the professional development coordinator position may indicate the presence of some ownership or control issues. A review of these processes may be needed before their continuation.

Differences between employee opinions of the use of personal and program performance evaluations for funding priority and those found in the literature may indicate a need to strengthen the connection between performance assessment and PD funding support. Additional discussion with employees concerning the value of tying performance assessment to PD planning and funding requests may be needed. The strong agreement by all groups concerning the "value added" to

the working/learning environment due to adequate funding may indicate that any lessening of the current support for PD activities may have negative consequences for employee moral and the overall learning environment for NMTC students.

Recommendations

Based on the data gathered during this project several recommendations were made. First, it was recommended that the survey be readministered during the fall 1994 employee workshop to increase the response rate and corroborate the findings as being representative of NMTC employee opinion. Second, the current PD activities should continue to be funded. Third, the current approval process, committee structure, and funding approval process be continued with all employee groups represented on the professional development committee. Fourth, the committee should review and/or revise its policies and procedures for communicating with employees. Fifth, efforts should be made to strengthen the connection between performance and program evaluation and allocation of PD funding support. And sixth, adequate funding support of professional development activities continue to be made available to all employees.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix

NMTC Staff Development Assessment

NMTC

Northern Maine Technical College

33 Edgemont Drive Presque Isle, Maine 04769 (207) 769-2461
FAX (207) 764-8465

MEMO

TO: All NMTC Employees

FROM: Terry Overlock

RE: Final Evaluation of the Title III Professional Development Project

DATE: May 2, 1994

As we near the completion of the Title III Professional Development Project it is important that all employees have an opportunity to share their opinions concerning the project. Even though future funding availability will be limited, it is important to identify aspects of the current program that have been successful and should be continued if possible.

This survey was developed as part of a project I'm doing in my graduate program. The information will be compiled into a final report and presented to the PDC and the management team for use in planning future professional development activities at NMTC.

Please complete the survey and return to me by Friday May 13, 1994. Completed surveys can be returned to me in room 211 or placed in my mail box in the mail room. Thank you for your assistance with this project. Your input is very much appreciated.

NMTC STAFF DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT

The following survey has been developed to provide all employees an opportunity to assess current staff development efforts and identify priorities for future actions. The results will be used in planning future development activities at NMTC.

Please circle the item below that indicates your current position.

Administration	Faculty	Staff

PART ONE

Please indicate your opinions on the following statements by circling the appropriate response.

Funding support for the following activities should be part of an ongoing professional development program at NMTC:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.__ Group workshops	1	2	3	4	5
2.__ University Courses	1	2	3	4	5
3.__ Training with follow-up	1	2	3	4	5
4.__ Seminars/workshops	1	2	3	4	5
5.__ Professional meetings	1	2	3	4	5
6.__ On-the-job work experience	1	2	3	4	5
7.__ National Conferences	1	2	3	4	5
8.__ Regional Conferences	1	2	3	4	5
9.__ Professional memberships	1	2	3	4	5
10.__ Subscriptions to professional journals	1	2	3	4	5
11.__ Staff/industry exchange	1	2	3	4	5

Please list other suggestions for professional development activities warranting funding support (ie. publications, conference papers, instructional materials development, software development, etc.)

PART TWO

The following statements are provided to allow you to comment on the current program structure and process. Please signify your opinion by selecting the appropriate number on the accompanying scale.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
12. The current approval process should be continued	1	2	3	4	5
13. The current individual development plan process should be continued	1	2	3	4	5
14. Individual development plans should be reviewed by one's immediate supervisor	1	2	3	4	5
15. Individual development plans should be reviewed by one's area supervisor	1	2	3	4	5
16. The current end-of-activity reporting requirements should be continued	1	2	3	4	5
17. The current professional development committee structure should be continued	1	2	3	4	5
18. The communications from the committee has been adequate and appropriate	1	2	3	4	5
19. Primary approval of professional development funding requests should rest with the professional development committee	1	2	3	4	5
20. All employee groups, including management, should be represented on the committee	1	2	3	4	5
21. Representation on the committee should be determined by each employee group	1	2	3	4	5
22. The professional development coordinator position should be continued with appropriate release time to fulfill duties	1	2	3	4	5
23. All NMTC employees should be eligible for funding support of professional development activities	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
24. Requests for funding should receive priority based on any or all of the following:					
A. Individual performance evaluation	1	2	3	4	5
B. Program evaluation	1	2	3	4	5
C. Individual development plans	1	2	3	4	5
D. Department goals	1	2	3	4	5
E. Institutional goals	1	2	3	4	5
F. Institutional mission	1	2	3	4	5
25. Annual professional development goals should be recommended by the professional development committee in support of the strategic plan	1	2	3	4	5
26. The availability of funding support for development activities has:					
A. made a difference to me personally	1	2	3	4	5
B. made a difference to me professionally	1	2	3	4	5
C. prompted many positive changes in my work environment	1	2	3	4	5
D. had a positive influence on the professional environment at NMTC	1	2	3	4	5
E. had a positive influence on student's experience at NMTC	1	2	3	4	5

Please feel free to share any other constructive criticism, you might have concerning the current professional development program and your feelings about what it should be after Title III. Your input is valued very much.

Appendix B

Responses to Open-ended Questionnaire Items

1. Are the faculty members going to get a listing as to how (per person) the money was spent?

2. The committee should work closely with neighboring colleges to offer courses required for professional development at times and places convenient to faculty and staff.

3. This Title III grant was a very beneficial program. I do believe future employment should be tied to use of funds. Some previous recipients are gone after having used NMTC funds to further their education.

4. Administration should not have the final decision. People who have not gone for a long time should have priority over someone who has gone to conferences or workshops recently. Not the same ones all the time. Groups in departments should go--more meaningful. Easier to implement ideas.

5. Thank you for the support I have received.

6. The committee should realize that staff shouldn't have to fight for every dime they get for their professional development. It doesn't matter how many teachers we have with doctorate degrees. If they (students) can't get through that front line of staff

first you will never see them.

7. Too many approvals needed. Too much paper work.

8. In regard to staff, it's difficult to get funding to help with schooling because a lot of classes "supposedly" don't pertain to the job. That may be true, but how do they expect staff to earn higher degrees when they can't get funding even though the classes are required for a degree. It should work both ways with faculty and staff.

9. Everyone should be eligible for professional development activities and not just faculty especially when it comes to taking classes. Staff work just as hard as administration and faculty and should be treated the same. Other people should be considered when applying to attend national conferences and not the same people who seem to go to several conferences every year.

10. I have been a temporary employee, but was funded for a national workshop which I can't even begin to list the growth and change I experienced from this time - thank you!

11. Do to lack of future funding, general "conference hopping" should be replaced with meaningful training and course work.